

Executive Order

77-9685/A

14 NOV 1977

Dr. James B. Rhoads
 Acting Chairman
 Interagency Classification Review Committee
 Washington, DC 20403

Dear Dr. Rhoads:

This is in reply to your letter of 26 October 1977, wherein you called to my attention the fact that the Central Intelligence Agency had, in numerous instances, failed to process mandatory classification review requests within the time limits established by Executive Order 11652.

Be assured that I share your concern. There have been extenuating circumstances, however, of which you may not be fully aware. The task of processing mandatory classification review requests falls upon the same personnel responsible for the handling of Freedom of Information and Privacy Act requests. These requests have been received in such volume that it has been impossible to fulfill them as promptly as we would like, and a sizable backlog has developed. In an effort to comply fully with both the letter and spirit of the law, the Agency has been devoting the equivalent of 100 man-years per year to processing requests, appeals, and litigation arising from requests from members of the public. Despite this, our backlog of unanswered requests not only persists but, in recent months, has grown. We, as an Agency, cannot divert additional manpower to this effort without seriously impairing our ability to perform our basic mission. It is our hope that in due course public interest in past CIA activities, which was stimulated by recent disclosures, will subside and the request level will fall to the point where our responses to requests will be as timely as we would desire.

On a more positive note, I am pleased to inform you that the Agency has closed out 452 mandatory classification review requests thus far in 1977, 108 more than were completed during all of 1976. Despite a significant increase in the

number of requests received, the unprocessed backlog has grown by only 20 cases and now stands at 108 cases. While this may seem large, it seems almost insignificant when compared to our unprocessed backlog of 869 Freedom of Information requests and 1,150 Privacy requests.

I can assure you that we will continue to make every effort to comply with the mandatory classification requirements.

Sincerely,

/s/John F. Blake
John F. Blake
Acting Deputy Director

IPS/CES/cb/7 Nov 77

Orig. - Adse.

- 1 - IPS Chrono w/copy basic
- ① - DDA Subject w/basic
- 1 - A/DDCI
- 1 - ER
- 1 - DDA Chrono
- 1 - RAB/ISAS w/copy basic

INTERAGENCY CLASSIFICATION REVIEW COMMITTEE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20408

10/26/77

OCT 26 1977

DD/A Registry
10/26/77

Mr. John F. Blake
Acting Deputy Director
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D.C. 20505

Dear Mr. Blake:

The President's expressed interest in increasing openness in government has added importance to the proper handling of requests for declassification of information submitted under provisions of Executive Order 11652, Section 5(C). Although the quality and thoroughness of review prior to decision is important, it is equally important to respond to requesters within time limits established by the Order.

Reports to the Committee show that as of December 31, 1976, CIA had completed processing 78% of the 441 requests it received for consideration during the year. Of the 95 cases carried forward to 1977, 33% were 60 days old as of the end of the year. In the first half of 1977, CIA had for consideration almost as many cases as it did during the entire year of 1976 (428). Incomplete cases carried forward for action as of June 30, 1977 was 38% of the total -- as opposed to 22% as of December 31, 1976. The number of cases over 60 days old as of the end of the reporting period was 98, 60% of the total carried forward. In summary, the case load is increasing rapidly, as is the number of cases which have not been completed within the time limits specified by the Order.

I know there are many factors which have contributed to this unfavorable situation, some of which are beyond your control. However, I believe your personal attention is warranted to reverse the trend.

I would appreciate your informing me of special problems encountered and actions you take in this matter.

Sincerely,

James B. Rhoads

JAMES B. RHOADS
Acting Chairman

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